

*In the Claims*

1. (Currently Amended) A method for creating an electronic document description of a computing environment installed on first computing hardware, the method comprises  
identifying at least one software component of the computing environment; and  
automatically generating an electronic document containing an identification of each of the at least one software component, the electronic document comprising instructions for automatically reconstructing the computing environment on the first computing hardware or on other computing hardware.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first computing hardware comprises a plurality of computers connected by a network.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a reconstruction of the computing environment from the electronic document installed on other computing hardware is behaviorally equivalent to the computing environment installed on the first computing hardware.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one software component comprises an operating system and an application.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4, further comprising  
identifying at least one data file to be used by the application; and  
including in the electronic document a representation of each of the at least one data file.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying at least one software component comprises identifying all software components installed on the first computing hardware.
7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the first computing hardware comprises a plurality of computers connected by a network.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising  
identifying a requirement for computing hardware on which the computing  
environment may be installed; and  
including in the electronic document a constraint corresponding to the  
requirement.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of automatically generating  
the electronic document comprises:  
identifying at least one parameter of the computing environment for abstraction;  
and  
abstracting the at least one parameter.
10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of storing the  
electronic document.
11. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of compressing  
the electronic document.
12. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of encrypting the  
electronic document.
13. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of transmitting  
the electronic document to a remote location.
14. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of replicating the  
stored electronic document.
15. (Currently Amended) A method for installing a computing environment on target  
computing hardware based on an electronic document description of the computing environment,  
the method comprising

obtaining an electronic document that contains a description of a computing environment to be installed;  
reading the electronic document;  
identifying candidate computing hardware for installation of the computing environment;  
selecting the target computing hardware from the candidate computing hardware for installation of the computing environment; and  
installing at least one software component on the target computing hardware in accordance with data contained in the electronic document.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the electronic document was previously abstracted from a computing environment installed on original computing hardware and wherein the computing environment installed on the target computing hardware is behaviorally equivalent to the computing environment installed on the original computing hardware.

17. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the step of obtaining an electronic document comprises the step of receiving an electronic document from a remote location.

18. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the step of obtaining an electronic document further includes

receiving an instruction from a remote user location to retrieve a user-specified electronic document from a storage location; and

retrieving the user-specified electronic document from the storage location.

19. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of installing at least one data file on the target computing hardware in accordance with data contained in the electronic document.

20. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the step of selecting the target computing hardware comprises

reading a set of hardware constraints from the electronic document;

identifying as acceptable computing hardware each of the candidate computing hardware that satisfies the set of hardware constraints; and  
selecting the target computing hardware from the acceptable computing hardware as the target computing hardware.

21. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising  
determining from the electronic document whether the computing environment includes a parameter; and  
if the computing environment includes a parameter then performing the following:  
selecting a value for the parameter; and  
providing an instantiated electronic document incorporating the value selected for the parameter.

22. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the step of installing at least one software component includes  
determining whether an owner of the target computing hardware has rights to use the at least one software component;  
installing the at least one software component when the owner of the target computing hardware has rights to use the at least one software component; and  
when the owner of the target computing hardware does not have rights to use the at least one software component, performing the following:  
determining whether a provider of the electronic document has rights to use the at least one software component;  
retrieving executable code for the at least one software component from a source when the provider of the electronic document has rights to use the at least one software component; and  
installing the at least one software component on the target computer hardware when the provider of the electronic document has rights to use the at least one software component.

23. (Original) A system for creating an electronic document description of a computing environment comprising:

first computing hardware whereon the computing environment is installed; and  
a processor in communication with the first computing hardware, wherein the processor is configured to identify a software component installed on the first computing hardware and to generate an electronic document that includes identification of the software component.

24. (Original) The system of claim 23 wherein the processor is a component of the first computing hardware.

25. (Original) The system of claim 23 wherein the processor communicates with the first computing hardware via a network.

26. (Original) A system for installing a computing environment on target computing hardware in accordance with an electronic document description, the system comprising:

a storage medium for storing one or more electronic documents, each of said one or more electronic documents containing a description of a computing environment;

a server connected to the storage medium for reading electronic documents and issuing instructions to install computing environments in accordance with the electronic documents;

candidate computing hardware whereon a computing environment may be installed, the target computing hardware being selected from the candidate computing hardware; and

a communication path between the server and the candidate computing hardware.

27. (Original) The system of claim 26 wherein the communication path comprises a network.

28. (Original) The system of claim 27 wherein the candidate computing hardware comprises a plurality of computer systems.

29. (Original) The system of claim 28 wherein the server is configured to select as the target computing hardware a subset of the plurality of computer systems.

30. (Original) The system of claim 29, wherein the server communicates with a remote user terminal via the Internet.

31. (Original) The system of claim 30, wherein the target computing hardware communicates with the remote user terminal via the Internet.

32. (Original) The system of claim 30 wherein the server is configured to receive from the remote user terminal an instruction to retrieve a user-selected electronic document from the storage medium and to install a computing environment on target computing hardware in accordance with the user-selected electronic document.

33. (Original) The system of claim 30 wherein the server is configured to retrieve an electronic document from the storage medium and to provide the retrieved electronic document to the remote user terminal.

34. (Original) The system of claim 30 wherein the server is configured to receive an electronic document description of a computing environment from the remote user terminal and to store the received electronic document in the storage medium.

35. (Original) A computer-readable medium including instructions for creating a computing environment, the computer-readable medium including  
one or more instructions for identifying at least one software component of the computing environment;  
one or more instructions for associating a constraint on the use of the software component.

36. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 35 ~~365~~, wherein the at least one software component includes an operating system.

37. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 35 ~~365~~, wherein the constraint includes an indication of a hardware architecture under which the software component can execute.

38. (Original) A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave comprising  
one or more instructions for identifying at least one software component of the computing environment;  
one or more instructions for associating a constraint on the use of the software component.

39. (Currently Amended) The computer data signal of claim 38 ~~368~~, wherein the at least one software component includes an operating system.

40. (Currently Amended) The computer data signal of claim 38 ~~368~~, wherein the constraint includes an indication of a hardware architecture under which the software component can execute.